The University of Chicago

THE NEGRO PREACHER IN AMERICAN FICTION BEFORE 1900

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
1942

BY
NANCY BULLOCK WOOLRIDGE

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
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Part II. The Negro Preacher Depicted in the Free Negro Community

The foregoing works using local color themes have portrayed the Negro preacher in a minor role and with little effect upon the main action. Yet his character received, on the whole, as full delineation as was compatible with his part in the general organization of the narrative. Since the main interest of the local color novel usually depended upon the depiction of characteristics that distinguished the major characters or the description of the peculiarities of the region in which the scene was laid, the significance of the minor characters was determined largely by their usefulness in elaborating the background or setting. Thus the Negro preacher appeared in local color fiction as a conventional character type on the plantation, emphasizing the distinctive features of the religious activities in the South.

As a major character, however, the Negro preacher appears in a number of short stories and tales written in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. While the main incidents in the plot express the individuality of the preacher, very often these incidents revealed the activities of a small Southern community. Hence the following characterizations in some respects resemble depictions previously discussed, but they differ basically in portraying the preacher as a central figure in a free Negro community. Dealing with the educational, social, political as well as religious problems of his race, the preacher of these scenes is characterized in terms of his reactions to the rapidly changing status of the newly emancipated Negro.

One short story which expresses a problem frequently encountered by the freed slave exhorter is James Lane Allen's "Two Gentlemen of Kentucky" which rendered some phases of the local color movement,[1] and in the main, reveals the character of a Negro

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[1] Knight points out the restraint of Allen in his usage of the local color interest, especially in terms of his previous essay defining the concept. Allen, he says, did not rely too much on dialect, unfamiliar scene, and peculiar manners or customs to conceal lack of story, as many of his contemporaries did, but made his native state his "definite field," laying the scene of his

preacher. The tale is founded in actuality, for there was an old Negro preacher on a blue-grass plantation whose name was Peter Cotton, whose mistress had made for him a coat similar to the one in the tale, and whose books were those of the fictional character.[1] Like most tales, this one was influenced by more than one actual person, and another old slave entered into the fictional character of Peter Cotton. The theme of the story, as suggested by the title, expresses the close regard that the "two gentlemen"--master and slave--felt for each other, as they advanced into old age in a society in which neither could find a suitable place, and reveals very clearly the immense social, economic, and religious changes after the Civil War.

According to this story Peter Cotton, "who was the only one of the colonel's former slaves that had remained inseparable from his person and his altered fortunes"[2] was a plantation preacher of the old type who did not keep pace with the times, and an excellent part of this depiction is the realization by both the old slave preacher and his master that they cannot adjust themselves to the new regime. From the first part of the plot to the point of their realization of this unfitness, and the description of its consequent effect upon the old gentlemen, there is an excellent portrayal of the life and character of the preacher. Two devices are used to exhibit these characteristics: first, the simple descriptive narrative which portrays the pre-war Peter and his activities on the plantation; second, the familiar recollection pattern in which Peter in his conversation with the Colonel relates pathetically some of the incidents of his early life.

By means of the first device, which in this instance is the most widely used one, the chief personality traits of Peter are elaborated, and the explanation of the mild slavery and kind treatment of Peter is made.

> Nay, in larger and deeper characters must his history be writ, he having been, in days gone by, one of those ministers of the gospel whom conscientious Kentucky masters often urged

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tales there (James Lane Allen and the Genteel Tradition [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1935]).

[1]Introduction to Flute and Violin and Other Kentucky Tales (New York: Harper, 1891), p. x.

[2]Ibid., p. 104.

> to the exercise of spiritual functions in behalf of their benighted people. In course of preparation for this august work, Peter had learned to read and had come to possess a well-chosen library of three several volumes--Webster's Spelling-Book, The Pilgrim's Progress, and the Bible. But even these unusual acquisitions he deemed not enough, for being touched with a spark of poetic fire from heaven, and enthused by the African's fondness for all that is conspicuous in dress, he had conceived for himself the claims and consolations of his apostolic office. This was nothing less than a sacred blue-jeans coat that he had had his old mistress make him, with very long and spacious tails, whereon, at his further direction, she embroidered sundry texts of Scriptures which it pleased him to regard as the fit visible annunciations of his holy calling. And inasmuch as his mistress, who had had the coat woven on her own looms from the wool of her finest sheep, was like other gentlewomen of her time, rarely skilled in the accomplishments of the needle, and was moreover in full sympathy with the piety of his intent, she wrought of these passages a border enriched with such intricate curves, marvellous flourishes, and harmonious letterings, that Solomon never reflected the glory in which Peter was arrayed whenever he put it on. For after much prayer that the Almighty wisdom would aid his reason in the difficult task of selecting the most appropriate texts, Peter had chosen seven: "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel"; "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh"; "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laded"; "Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin"; "Now abideth faith, hope and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity"; "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep"; "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."[1]

In a mildly humorous manner the narrative relates the travels of Peter, "panoplied in this robe of righteousness," and pays tribute to him for his care and thought of his fellow slaves as he preached from cabin to cabin. Even though Peter's strange garment might amuse the sophisticated reader, the slaves found consolation in the very sight of it. However, they thought no more highly of it than did Peter, who would not mind exposing himself to the inclement weather if he could protect his coat. Held in high regard by master and fellow slave, Peter is presented as the faithful slave who refused to leave his master after he was freed, rejecting the colonel's offer of financial assistance in establishing a business. After the death of the old preacher's wife, he and the colonel were left alone, becoming even closer friends.

This narrative offers little plot in the sense of sus-

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[1]Ibid., pp. 105-6.

pense and complication, since emphasis is placed upon scene and character. Detailed description reveals the personal traits and peculiarities of both old men, as they grew older and withdrew farther away from current life in the community. It seems that an equal amount of attention is bestowed upon Peter as upon the colonel, for even the personal appearance of the preacher is described:

> Peter had a short, stout figure, dark-brown skin, smooth-shaven face, eyes round, deep-set and wide apart, and a short stub nose which dipped suddenly into his head, making it easy for him to wear the silver rimmed spectacles left him by his old mistress. A peculiar conformation of the muscles between the eyes and nose gave him the quizzical expression of one who is about to sneeze, and this was heightened by a twinkle in the eyes which seemed caught from the shining sun upon his tranquil heart.[1]

Since the main purpose of the story is the depiction of character, it is not surprising that few activities of the preacher are related. The author quickly passes over the relationships with other servants without name or specific detail, and turns the attention again to the relationship between Peter and his old master--their problem of adjustment to a new post-war world, their pathetic attempts to enjoy the life around them. Hence there was no necessity for the customary religious service, yet when it became necessary to dramatize Peter's maladjustment to the new environment, the author chose to demonstrate Peter's inability to integrate himself into the religious life of his former fellow slaves. Since the most appropriate instance would be the realization of his unfitness for service in the work for which he was best prepared, Peter is shown as he attempts to secure the pastorate of a fashionable church in the city. He was invited to preach a trial sermon.

> It was a strange scene, as one calm Sunday morning he stood on the edge of the pulpit, dressed in a suit of the colonel's old clothes, with one hand in his trousers pocket, and his lame leg set a little forward at an angle familiar to those who know the statues of Henry Clay.
>
> How self-possessed he seemed, yet with what a rush of memories did he pass his eyes slowly over the vast assemblage of his emancipated people! With what feelings must he have contrasted those silk hats, and walking-canes and broadcloths. . . . .
>
> In a voice husky, but heard beyond the flirtation of the uttermost pew, he took his text: "Consider the lilies of the

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[1] Ibid., p. 108.

> field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin." From this he tried to preach a new sermon suited to the newer day. But several times the thoughts of the past were too much for him, and he broke down with emotion.
>
> The next day a grave committee waited on him and reported that the sense of the congregation was to call a colored gentleman from Louisville. Private objections to Peter were that he had a broken leg, wore Colonel Field's second-hand clothes, which were too big for him, preached in the old-fashioned way, and lacked self-control and repose of manner.[1]

Accepting his rebuff in the same spirit in which the colonel had given up his business ventures, Peter retired with the colonel into greater seclusion.

In the last section of the account, when Peter and the colonel made no more efforts to participate in current life, the second device of telling the tale is emphasized. Because of weakness and gradual decline in health, the master had drawn closer to the servant, and as they walked in the garden he leaned on Peter's arm instead of preceding him down the path. There they began their reminiscences and Peter told his love story while the colonel listened and later told his own. These incidents serve only to emphasize the tie that bound the two, creating more definitely the atmosphere of seclusion and isolation that pervaded the lives of the "two gentlemen."

Since the colonel died first, the tragedy is concluded in the depiction of Peter's gradual decay. The loneliness of the old preacher is heightened by his separation from his own people, and is sentimentally symbolized by the picture he presented as he stood, Bible in hand, at the grave of the colonel, wearing the faded blue coat of the many texts, and pointing to his favorite text: "I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep."

The depiction of Peter Cotton admirably indicates the varying social and religious problems which writers explored in delineating the character of the Negro preacher in scenes following Emancipation. Particularly significant as a commentary upon the new social attitudes which characterized post-war Negro life, with which the Negro preacher had to deal, was Peter's rejection by his own people. Although the pathetic character of the old preacher emerges as much from his incapacity to adjust his preaching to the new age as from his general unfitness for the times,

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[1] Ibid., p. 109.

he is depicted mainly as an old, devoted family slave rather than as a minister of the Gospel. The fact that he was a preacher adds poignancy to the situation, colors the tale, but does not naterially affect the character portrayal for uses of the plot. Had Peter belonged to any other profession than the ministry his relationship with the colonel would have been the same. However, the blending of the character traits of the beloved servant with those of the conventional plantation preacher presents a unique personality.

Some short stories more particularly emphasized the duties and responsibilities of the emancipated Negro preacher as he participated in the activities and problems of his church members. Occasionally he is a background figure, as in many novels, functioning as he does in actual daily life--at marriages, funerals, and in church services. More often the preacher is of greater significance to the plot, and appears by detailed character analysis in varied scenes expressing sociological problems of Negro communities.

One such account uses the preacher as a motivating force in the plot, and at the same time presents a good individualized portrayal of the old plantation exhorter type who had become an alert leader of his people in their emancipated life. The title, "De Valley an De Shadder" arises from the strong impression made by the preacher's words upon one of the main characters. The scene is a small community, Black Ankle, where big, black Ben Thomas, because of his young mulatto wife, Mandy, had been in a fight with a gambler, had killed the man and had been put into jail. Mandy, crushed and ashamed, was conscience-stricken because she had thrown into the jungle the one piece of evidence which might have saved her husband--the knife with which the gambler first attacked Ben. Reverend Kesiah Toomer, or "Unc' 'Siah," was anxious to save Ben, but Mandy was so distracted that she was not acting normally, and was uncommunicative. Deciding to help if he could, the good old preacher called upon Mandy and her Aunt Charlotte, who reluctantly allowed him to come into the house. While he was there he talked so discreetly and kindly to the two that finally his words brought Mandy to her senses, and to a supreme action which led to the release of her husband.

In the characterization of Uncle 'Siah, it is notable that the influence of the old man is gradually revealed through

the author's comments and the preacher's conversation. Such sentences as these indicate his tactfulness as he endeavors to help his church members: "His aged face, full of wrinkles, and his white eyebrows, beamed down kindly upon them"; or on another occasion: "'Mornin', Aunt Charlotte,' he said, touching the battered old straw hat that kept the sun from his bald head and its kinky fringe of snowy hair; 'how you do des mornin'?' his soft flexible voice full of conciliatory curves."[1] After ingratiating himself with the family, Uncle 'Siah showed very keen insight into the trouble that had come upon his friends, for he clearly pointed out the only means by which Ben could be saved--finding the knife and securing the intervention of "Marse Bob" who lived seventy miles away. Throughout the dialogue, the reader perceives that despite the old preacher's apparent mildness and ignorance he completely realized Mandy's mental state, as well as the seriousness of the situation, and had definitely undertaken to change it. The reader's suspense is fully aroused when, with a gleam in her eye, Mandy suddenly arose, while the tactful old preacher continued his kindly, unruffled discussion of the misfortune. Ignoring her impulsive action, for he obviously thought that she had not been sufficiently stirred, he took out his Bible and his silver-rimmed spectacles and read in a stumbling way the Twenty-third Psalm, giving his comments as follows:

> De Lord es my sheppud, I shall not want.[2] "Bless de Lord fur dat! 'Shall not want'; you heah dat, Sis Mandy, not want fur nuth'n'. Don' car w'at hit es, you shall not want hit long, sha'n't keep on er want'n hit ef de Lord es yo' sheppud--an you es one er de flock. No, chile!"
>
> He makes me to lay down in green pastures, 'e leads me beside de still waters. "Yes, Lord, we know w'at dat means fur er sheep--whar de grass es long an' green an' de water es cole, en deir es shade all day long; dat's de place fur yo' sheep an' yo' lambs."
>
> He resto'ith my soul, he leads up de paf er de righteous fur es name' sake. "Des heah dat! Hit makes no diffunce what dat paf es er-gain; by de big road, or ercross de cornrows, er troo de swamp hitse'f--he's gointer lead de way; an' hit's all de same ef hit's day er night; hit's all one wide de Lord."
>
> Yea, though I walk troo de valley er de shadder er death, I'll fear no devil.--"No sir-r-r-! No devil gointer hu't you deir, fur deir's er han' en de shadder, an' hit's mor'n er

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[1]Harry Stillwell Edwards, Two Runaways and Other Stories (New York: Century, 1886), p. 172.

[2]The italics are the author's.

match fur him and his kind; dat hit es!"

Fur thou art wid me, thy rod an thy staff dey comforts me. "Oh yes, chillun, Jesus es deir by de side er de troo believer, ef dey only knowed hit. An' w'en dey es come out er de valley er de shadder w'at den?"

Thou prepares' er table fur me en de presunce uv my enemies; thou a-n-o-i-n-t-e-t-h- my head with oil, an' my cup hit runs over. "Dat'll be er happy day den! Oh yes, oh yes, w'en de cup es full de heart es full, an' de eyes dey runs ober, 'cause uv de fullness erway down below. W'en dat tayble es spread hit'll make anybody's eyes run over; barbecued shote, br'iled chicken, fat ham, biscuits, white bread, 'simmun beer, all spread right deir en de presunce er de enemy, de ole devil hisse'f fairly bustin' wid hunger an' spite, but pow'less 'cause de sheppud es deir ter guard de lam's.

"An' w'en hit's all done w'at ses de prophet? W'en de hard heart done lay down hits load an' de feet been en de valley and de shadder, an' by de waters an' cross de pastures er-fearin' nuth'n, w'at den?"

Sholy, ses he, sholy--"oh hit's er great word is dat sholy"--sholy goodness an' mussy shall foller me all de days er my life an dwell den in de house er de Lord. "Bless him fur de promise!"[1]

This exhortation electrified Mandy, and with bright eyes she gave the baby to her aunt, and quickly left the house. The words of the old preacher rang in her ears all through the dark night in the swamp when she was struggling forward in water up to her waist; when she found the knife in the swamp; and when, almost exhausted, the seventy miles to "Marse Bob" seemed impossible to accomplish. Pervading the whole dramatic narrative are the words of the preacher and their effect on the mind of Mandy. Hence, in a way, the preacher is the dominating figure in the narrative, the character who initiates the main action although he actually does nothing but come to the house and read his Bible.

In the character traits which are suggested through Uncle 'Siah's elucidation of the Twenty-third Psalm, the old man exhibits many of the simple, naive religious ideas of the pre-war plantation exhorter. Although by his guarded conversation with Mandy and Charlotte he is portrayed as diplomatic leader, keen in his judgment of human nature, yet his interpretation of the "bountiful table" in terms of the actual food that he and the members of his church ate on feast days illustrates his material conception of heavenly bliss. Despite his apparent ignorance, he possessed good sense and gave sound advice. These character traits emerge through the plot and through Uncle 'Siah's words which haunt the

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[1]Harry Stillwell Edwards, op. cit., pp. 176-77.

penitent Mandy as she makes the almost superhuman effort to rectify her ill deeds. It is significant here that the old type preacher is not displayed in the conventional church service, but is revealed in his effect upon one individual whose actions immediately reveal the power of his exhortation. This procedure produces a compactness of plot and singleness of aim that the description of the familiar church sermon and large audience prevented, offering at the same time a more impressive characterization of the preacher.

In some of the stories which dealt with the Negro community, the preacher was the main character whose actions formed the central interest of the narrative. Of this type was James Welsh's A White Baby (1895), which also is an example of stories presenting the problems facing the pastor of a church when he evades the tricks of female worshippers, especially widows, who commonly made matrimonial advances to the preacher. Frequently, humorous stories[1] show the various wiles of the widow as she attempts to attract the attention of the minister, but this story is melodramatic in its portrayal of the villainous widow who had been rejected by the minister and took her revenge upon him and his wife by exchanging babies, and bringing much sorrow and disgrace upon them. The story reaches its greatest power in the delineation of the preacher's character under pressure, when suspicion and mistrust oppress him as he defends his wife's reputation. The account is further interesting in its reference to the problem of color within the race, since the whole trouble had its root in the fact that the baby was of white complexion, and the minister and his wife were black.

Though Reverend Abram White exhibited some of the conventional characteristics of the pre-war slave preacher, he was more closely related to the admirable post-war type. In appearance he was the familiar tall, rather spare figure, appearing much older than he actually was. Apparently not educated, he admired learning; for he constantly visited the little school which was taught by Miss Loo Adams, an eighteen-year-old ex-slave whom the preacher later married. Reverend White was also commendable for his industry; he worked as a day laborer at Marl Flats, and preached for

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[1] Dunbar utilized this motif rather often. Cf. "A Matter of Doctrine" in The Heart of Happy Hollow.

no salary at all. Deeply pious and gentle, he was nevertheless Herculean in strength and competently defended himself physically as well as spiritually. By explanation and dramatic action the personality traits of Abram White are set forth, since it is necessary to know his individual nature and the strength of his character in order to understand his actions. For example, his generosity is pointed out:

> . . . . As the minister of Pine Open he earned nothing. And in its everyday normal condition, Marl Flats was as uninviting a field of labor as the world at that time could show. . . . . With the money he had saved the minister bought the wood that built the chapel. And he worked night and day like a team of horses, to put it up. . . . . Did anyone ever know Abram White to keep flour and pork to himself when a fatherless child or a widow had none? Who was so ready as their minister to help an overwrought brother to clean out his pit, or push up a truck, or fill it, or lend a dollar, or catch a mule? Who was so ready to check the bad word, or put the cork in the bottle or kick over a still or walk into a row? What baby in Pine Open would think it was properly christened if it hadn't been christened by the Rev. Abram White? Or what man and woman would think they were properly married if he hadn't married them? Or what man if they were dying would they like most to have around their bedside?[1]

This tribute was appropriately introduced into the narrative by means of speeches given by the elders at the elaborate wedding of Miss Loo and Reverend White. Other characteristics were also expressed when one of the good brothers reviewed the experiences with the minister, speaking of the time when someone mistook his gentleness for softness and was forcibly undeceived by the minister's fists.[2] Also at the wedding the depth of "Widder" Wyning's hatred of the newly-weds was evident, especially as she saw the great affection they had for each other and realized that her marriage of spite would have no effect upon the minister. From contemplation of the happiness of this couple came the woman's fiendish plan of exchanging her baby for the minister's child. Henceforth, the action moves rapidly--Reverend Abram falls into disfavor with his congregation when the white baby is seen, and whispering campaigns accuse Loo of immorality and attack the preacher for shielding her. Through all of this his deep piety and patience are revealed in a clear manner. Particularly important is

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[1]James Welsh, A White Baby (New York: F. A. Stokes Co., 1895), pp. 28, 40-41.

[2]Ibid., p. 45.

the great effort he made to restrain the natural resentment that a pastor would feel when he perceived the poor reward he was receiving for the services he had freely rendered. Once, when things had reached a high pitch, Abram could bear it no longer and confronted the elders:

> "What!" thundered Abram, silencing the crowd with the lightning of his eye. "Den what yo' cheer fo? Does yo' tink I'se ony a minister an' not a man? Lem me tell yo' de Lord made me a man at de furst, an' he 'spec's ebbery minister to be a man to de las', an' dat's jes' what Ab'm White's gwine to be. Do yo' hear'n me? De Lord don' want a minister what ain' a man. I ain' no kid glove minister, no mo'n yo's kid glove folks. An' strike? Moses was a minister, and Moses struck. Samiwell was a minister, an' didn't he strike; Elijah was a minister an' didn't Elijah strike; Peter was a minister an' didn't Peter strike; de Lord hisself was a minister, an' didn't de Lord strike? Yes, out an' out tip-top ministers all o' dem, what cared no mo' fo' de debble den I does fo' yo'."
>
> "Yah! but yo' ain' Moses!" these men shouted. "No, nor yo' ain' Sammiwell! An' yo' ain' Elijah! No, an' yo' ain' de Lord hisself!"
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> "No!" roared Abram, shaking his fist at them; "but by de Lord A'mighty, I'se Abram, an' if any man 'sults my wife an' chile, I'll make dat man's bones like de sands o' de seashore fo' multitude!"[1]

This outburst indicated the storm that had been brewing in the preacher's breast, for although Abram White seemed to be a man who held his emotions in full control, the false accusations warranted some action. Further, this preacher was capable of great oratory and emotionalism on occasion. It has been seen that, like its pastor, his church was very ignorant, and that religious fervor expressed itself vocally:

> . . . . In his discourses Abram's earnestness was electrical. There were times when it brought the whole congregation to their feet with a bound and a shout, and there were times when it sent them to their knees with a groan. When he recited any of the very few hymns he knew by heart, it was not unusual for his hearers to abandon themselves to their feelings and lose all self-control. And the difference between the shepherd and the sheep in constitutional temperament was but slight. . . . .[2]

The crisis came one Sunday morning when Abram found a strange minister in his pulpit. The sermon was clearly directed to Abram and his wife, but it fell flat. "From the beginning of the discourse to the end, Abram's patient, sorrowful eyes were fixed on the preacher and do what he would the preacher could not

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[1] Ibid., p. 105. [2] Ibid., p. 107.

get on."[1] Loyal to his wife in spite of all attacks, Abram went sadly about his work in the marl pits, while his persecutors felt worse than he as they recalled his many small kindnesses to them. When at last during the illness of the child the irrational actions of "Widder" Wyning revealed the deception, the church members were overwhelmed with shame, begged forgiveness, and were pardoned by the preacher.

Significantly, this account focuses attention directly upon the personality of the preacher as he reacted to persecution, and reveals his close resemblance to the old plantation exhorter who bore physical suffering under the slave system, exemplifying in his personality the main concepts of religious patience. Here, the time and setting are different, the persecutors are members of his own race and his own church, and the preacher is more intelligent; but the same character traits prevail. The gigantic body and great physical powers are subdued and controlled by a superior force whose restraint is made more vivid by an occasional outburst. Contrasted with the minister's self-sacrificing goodness of heart, with his dignified though modest demeanor, and with his striking intelligence, though he was uneducated, are the villainous enemies who should have been his friends. By placing this preacher in a small community characterized by narrow-mindedness and ignorance, the novelist provided an excellent situation for the portrayal, by contrast, of an admirable minister whose actions revealed his strong personality throughout the plot.

Similar in plot is Ruth McEnery Stuart's "Widder Johnsing," another tale of the widow who laid her snares for the preacher. Here the treatment is light and humorous rather than serious and melodramatic, and there is no attempt to display so powerful a preacher as Abram White. "Brer Julius Langford" is the conventionally portrayed minister, imitative, ignorant, and insincere. The widow uses various ruses to inveigle the young minister to her home, and succeeds so well that he becomes a constant visitor on one pretext or another. The preacher is not a dynamic figure here--the widow makes advances and he accepts them, though apparently he does not seek them. He is not overscrupulous about his association with her, is happy to eat everything

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[1] Ibid., p. 142.

she can provide,[1] including the beer which accidentally appeared on the shelf one day. If a marriage was to take place the widow would have to propose; therefore she very cleverly appeared ill, absenting herself from church, and when the minister came to seek the reason, she cried as she told him that he must not come to see her again because she was falling in love with him. The portrayal of a preacher drawn into metrimony by his devoted member indicates a fresh type of characterization for the pompous, insincere, ignorant minister, who is sometimes depicted as he uses this flattering attention of the ladies diplomatically in carrying out his church program.[2]

Apparently there were as many varied treatments[3] of the post-war preacher as there were of the pre-war slave exhorter, and the depictions of the small Negro community in which the preacher played an important part revealed the minister in almost every conceivable manner. Thus the newer treatment displayed the preacher in the everyday role of pastor of the church wrestling with the small problems of church management, or advising his church members in a crisis like "Unc' 'Siah" in "De Valley and De Shadder," or solving his personal problems as Reverend Abram White did in A White Baby. If the preacher appeared in the trivial affairs of everyday life among his parishioners, he was most often seen in the background of the action, even if he performed certain essential functions. This was true in another tale of

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[1]The preacher's unusual fondness for food, and the employment of this predilection to ensnare him, became a conventional characteristic in fictional portrayals of various kinds. Note Dunbar's "A Matter of Doctrine" in this connection. The theme is carried to its extremity in a humorous account by Anne Hobson in a short story which tells of Miss Mouse, the little black merchant. A council from her church was judging this lady, when she conceived the idea of preparing them a delicious meal. Preachers and elders realized just what might happen if they found Miss Mouse guilty, and in deference to their appetites, exonerated her (In Old Alabama [New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1903], pp. 119 ff.).

[2]In "Crazy Abe" by the same author, there is a brief description of the preacher in this same vein, concluding that the minister was "powerful sot on visitin' mungs' de sisters."

[3]An old type recollection account tells of a boy named Lamentations, who as a minister preached a sermon recounting his conversion when he saw his name at the top of a page in the Bible, "Lamentations of Jeremiah." (See "Lamentations of Jeremiah Johnson," in A Golden Wedding and Other Tales by Ruth McEnery Stuart.)

Ruth McEnery Stuart, "Golden Wedding," in which the preacher performs an unusual wedding rite. The plot belongs to the well-known mistaken identity type in which two ex-slaves discover that they are husband and wife, but because of a sale during slave days have been separated many years, and have not recognized each other in the free community. Consulting their pastor, Parson Brown, they decided that it was proper to remarry, and the good minister announced to the Sunday morning audience that the wedding would take place that afternoon. In the manner of the old plantation exhorter, he performed the ceremony, painting simply the hardships and separations of the old people:

> "Hit's true," he resumed, "dis aged couple is well on in yeahs, and look like dey journey is mos' done, but ef dey got de cou'ge ter teck han's fur de las' mile o' de road, tain fur de likes o' us ter discou'ge 'em! An' when I looks at dis ole man, ripe in yeahs, as de Book say, an' 'cripit an' failen' in steps, an' I know dey's a woman what's willin' ter stan' up an teck de spornserbility o' follerin' dat man clean tell 'e gits ter de gate o' de kingdom, I bless de Lord an' say, dat woman got cur'ge, sho! She is born inter de light, caze hit would be a dark journey fur de unconverted! Wherefore . . . . in de face o' de facs an' in de presence o' yo' all I pernounce 'em once mo' man an' wife!"[1]

The old minister did not stop at this point in his exhortation, but called attention to the fact that this was to be a golden wedding, and that the old people had no money. The audience responed heartily to his suggestion, offering small coins as gifts to help the bride and groom begin life anew.

The characterization of the preacher here reveals the personality and character traits only as they occur through the actions related to the golden wedding. Little individualization is given except the suggestion of his kindliness, of his influence in the church when he invited the people to the wedding and then proposed the contribution from the audience. However, his sensible remarks and clear perception of the circumstances that had separated and reunited the old couple, and his analysis of their personal problems, show an intelligent realization of the peculiarities and difficulties which confronted his group at that time. Like many other ignorant preachers he possessed good common judgment and a sense of justice and propriety. There is manifestly nothing hypocritical, pompous, or insincere about him, and

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[1]Ruth McEnery Stuart, A Golden Wedding and Other Tales (New York: Harper, 1893), p. 71.

in terms of the plot there is no need for further revelation of his personal qualities, since the main plot depicts the life and fortunes of other Negro characters.

Clearly, the fiction presenting the Negro preacher as he performed his pastoral duties in the small community where his congregation had daily intercourse with him differs essentially from the narratives in which the exhorter lived on his master's plantation and only on specific occasions, after his other duties were performed, associated with his congregation. When the writer depicts the preacher in a free community, there is an opportunity to portray him in far greater detail in his varied actions in the community life.

The fiction which portrayed the preacher in scenes laid after the Ku Klux Klan terror had subsided individualized the new type preacher as he appeared as leader of the community, participating in the economic or political problems that arose in relationships with the employer groups or political leaders. For instance, in one of Sherwood Bonner's Dialect Tales there is a scene in which the preacher goes to inquire concerning the murder of one of his members who had been in a fight with a white man with whom he had for some time been at odds. The preacher is ignorant, but quite capable of handling the situation:

> "Give me de satisfacshun to interduce myse'f," said the old man with dignity, "as de parster of the Fust Methodis' Church, limited."
>
> "Limited to what?" I said profanely.
>
> "To de godly an' to de seekers; an' to dis latter class our departed brudder, Bud Kane, belonged. He wuz a seekin' sperrit."
>
> "Bud Kane again!"
>
> "Dat pore wild lad lost his life as so many of our color loses der manly sperrit--by submittin' to de white folks as if dey wuz monkeys instid o' men. But, in spite of Bud bein' in some sort a son of Belieal, he wanted to do what wuz right; en he hed agreed ter give us a small sum toward erectin' a edifice fur prayer an' praise. . . . .
>
> "I don't see how this matter concerns me!" cried I, though alas, I did see with fatal clearness what he was after.
>
> "I was thinkin' marster," he said severely, "dat it mought be a sort o' balm o' Gilead to your conscience to supply dat sum."[1]

Since outside the house was a mob of excited members of the First Methodist Church, Limited, the old preacher secured his contribution.

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[1]Sherwood Bonner (McDowell), Dialect Tales (New York: Harper & Bros., 1883), p. 31.

Although the minister spoke ignorantly, it is evident that he understood the circumstances and fearlessly asserted his power. In depicting the rising social problems, novelists thus characterized older ministers who endeavored to settle difficulties that resulted from the New racial consciousness of younger Negroes who had not experienced life under the slave regime and adjusted less easily to restrictions imposed by the white residents of their communities.

Usually fiction expressing race relations, unlike the strictly propagandist novel, made little attempt to persuade directly, but presented the situation as the author objectively perceived it. In this kind of fiction, the preacher was a minor character, appearing often in only one scene and employed solely to illustrate some phase of the thought of the novel. Near the turn of the century, a type of novel that frequently presented the preacher through this device employed the familiar theme of the beautiful octoroon, who, because of her light complexion, conflicted with the Negro community, or as a victim of circumstances was ignorant of her racial relationship until sudden discovery raised a conflict. The whole matter of miscegenation affected the preacher indirectly as he appeared in minor scenes.

One novel that illustrates the problems of the octoroon reveals the fortunes of Regenia, granddaughter of an abolitionist whose daughter married a fugitive slave. In this case, although the young girl is reared conventionally by a relative, the heroine realizes her position and is socially prominent among the upper classes of Negroes in Washington, D. C. The minister appears in only one scene when Regenia and her friends visit a church. He is the newer, well educated, cultured type of preacher. Conscious of racial problems, he "preached in simpler and better English than she had heard in more pretentious pulpits, but there was nothing noteworthy in his remarks beyond a supplication to the Almighty to deliver the Negro from the oppression of the 'Southern tyrant" followed by an admonition to the Negro to improve himself in mind and character if he would hope to compete with the whites."[1]

By far the most impressive among these novels dealing with

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[1]Gertrude Atherton, Senator North (London: John Lane: The Bodley Head, 1900), p. 14.

problems of miscegenation is William Dean Howells' An Imperative Duty, in which the beautiful octoroon, reared to think that she is the descendant of a most aristocratic family, is suddenly made aware of her Negro blood. Stricken with horror, recoiling from her aunt who had deceived her, and shuddering at her own reaction, she wanders, nearly crazed, through the streets until she is accidentally drawn into a Negro church. The novel at this point portrays the mental agitation of the heroine, and the scene at the church is presented through her distorted vision:

> She did not know what the preacher was talking about at first, but phrases and words now and then caught in her consciousness. He was entirely black, and he was dressed in black from head to foot, so that he stood behind the pulpit like a thick soft shadow cast upon the wall by an electric light. His absolute sable was relieved only by the white points of his shirt collar and the glare of his spectacles, which when the light struck them heightened the goblin effect of his presence. He had no discernible features. When he turned his profile in addressing those who sat at the sides, it was only a wavering blur against the wall. His voice was rich and tender, with those caressing notes in it which are the peculiar gift of his race.[1]

During this scene Rhoda's eyes glance over the audience and the realization of her relationship with the dusky people around her was relieved only by the singing. Because her attention was not solely directed to the preacher, there is little evidence of his individuality, except that he is a Southern student, desirous of obtaining money for his college and interested in race relations. Although his sermon is described by the author as having a "lame conclusion," it nevertheless had a definite effect on the distracted girl, calming her "frenzy of abhorrence," and forcing her to realize the futility of struggle. In spite of the device of presenting the preacher only as he impressed the girl, his sermon reveals his religious optimism as he applies it to the race problem:

> "Yes, my friends," it went on saying, "you got to commence doing a person good if you expect to love them as Jesus loved us when he died for us. And oh, if our white brethren could only understand--and they're gettin' to understand it--that if they would help us a little more they needn't hate us so much, what a great thing . . . . it would be all round."[2]

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[1] William Dean Howells, An Imperative Duty (New York: Harper, 1893), p. 92.

[2] Ibid., p. 94.

In these novels presenting racial problems, the scene and setting of the preacher's actions, his personal appearance, and his character traits have changed. As a minor character in these novels, the preacher is none the less distinctive, since the fleeting glimpses of his performance are definitely integrated with the action, in contrast to earlier novels which gave unrelated episodes to reveal him. Even though the pattern in these novels was not unlike the earlier one in which the kindly Southerner or converted Northerner visited the Negro meeting out of curiosity or amiable sympathy, the visitor to these church scenes is affected in some specific way by the preacher, however minute the detail of this influence might be upon the thought of the main character.

> After the reading, singing, and prayer, the minister arose. He was tall and somewhat inclined to stoop. As black as ebony, his features were sharp and well proportioned, his hair as white as driven snow. Apparently old, judging from his white locks, his black eyes had lost none of their fire; his voice none of its pathos. It was plain that nature had carved him for a ruler. His text was from Psalms, his theme "God's Protecting Care" . . . . His voice at first low, but wonderfully distinct, gained strength and power as the theme unfolded. He related incident after incident of God's protecting care. Regenia thought she could see his countenance soften, his eyes brighten, and the very man himself living through the scenes he so eloquently described.[1]

As in the old plantation scenes, the service here is portrayed through the effect of the sermon upon the audience, but this time there is no loud, noisy appreciation and the whole effect indicates dignity and restraint. Impressions of the preacher are gained through the heroine's musings as she wonders how a Negro preacher could have attained such fluency of speech and unusual wisdom as this one exhibited.

Other novels which reveal glimpses of the preacher show considerable interest in the problems of the octoroons who had not been informed of their anomalous position and were either hurt or disconcerted at the discovery. This is one of the main problems in Gertrude Atherton's Senator North, wherein an octoroon's Negroid propensities--her personal appearance, such as the bluish tinge around her fingernails, and her inherent emotionalism, revealed in an uncontrollable love for Methodism--were as-

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[1] J. McHenry Jones, Hearts of Gold (Wheeling: Daily Intelligencer Steam Job Press, 1896), p. 109.

serted as proof of her racial identity. As the half-sister of the heroine, she is carefully analyzed and indirectly reveals the author's conception of Negro revivalists. However, the only depiction of the preacher is casual, differing from the preceding one only in the minister's personal appearance, who this time is a mulatto. It is significant that the Negro preacher and his congregation were employed as a means of presenting in fiction the changes in Negro life and character.

At the turn of the century, the fictional portrayals of the preacher portrayed settings that described smaller religious groups which exemplified almost every phase of community life, in which the preacher was the religious leader. Among those writers who popularized this type of presentation was Paul Lawrence Dunbar, whose short stories are particularly interesting because of their frequent depiction of the preacher.[1] Like the works of writers previously examined, his stories often have the preacher as a main character. A consideration of all the presentations of preachers in his short stories[2] reveals that they fall generally

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[1]Dunbar is the first Negro author to present any detailed treatment of the Negro author in fiction. A statistical study of this matter appears in a Master's thesis by Helen Bernice Allen (Fisk University). Miss Allen reports: "It is of interest to note that although it is generally believed that the Negro is essentially religious, the Negro author has not made the minister the principal character of his fiction. . . . . Of the sixty-nine novels examined in this study, the preacher is the leading character in only eight. . . . . In the thirty-two others in which he appears at all, he enters as he does in our daily lives. . . . . Of the short stories read . . . . only eight of the 192 makes use of the minister as a character major or minor" (Miss Allen excepts Dunbar). She further states: "The truly religious Negro minister is the most often portrayed by the Negro author. Four types of sincere ministers . . . . the proportion of hypocritical Negro ministers portrayed by Negro writers is very small. . . . ." ("The Minister of the Gospel in Negro American Fiction," Master's thesis, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee).

[2]From four popular collections of Dunbar's short stories, the Negro preacher is a significant character in the following: Folks from Dixie (1898): "Annie Lizer's Stumblin' Block"; "The Ordeal of Mt. Hope"; "The Trial Sermons on Bull Skin"; "Mt. Pisgah's Christmas 'Possum." The Strength of Gideon (1899): "The Strength of Gideon"; "The Fruitful Sleeping of the Rev. Elisha Edwards"; "Jim's Probation"; "Uncle Simon's Sundays Out"; "A Mess of Pottage." The Heart of Happy Hollow (1904): "One Christmas at Shiloh"; "A Matter of Doctrine"; "Old Abe's Conversion"; "The Triumph of Ol' Miss Pease." In Old Plantation Days (1903): "The Walls of Jericho"; "How Brother Parker Fell from Grace"; "The Trousers"; "The Last Fiddling of Mordaunt Jim."

into three groups: first, portraits of the old type plantation exhorter; second, portrayals of various aspects of the preacher's pastoral duties; third, the characterizations of the new type preacher. The second group is particularly inclusive since it represents the numerous church activities in which the preacher naturally played a vital part.

Dunbar's depiction of the old plantation exhorter closely conforms to the conventional pattern. The group of stories forming the collection In Old Plantation Days offers the best portrayal of the plantation preacher and is particularly interesting since the various stories set forth one preacher from different points of view. "The Walls of Jericho" shows Brother Parker in competition with a rival preacher who has lured away the slaves to his revival meeting. "How Brother Parker Fell from Grace" reveals the preacher in a less admirable situation when he was caught at his after-meeting diversion of card-playing. "The Trousers" provides the typical exhorter's sermon, and "The Last Fiddling of Mordaunt's Jim" gives Brother Parker's death. All these scenes are laid on the plantation of Stuart Mordaunt and describe the intimate lives of numerous slaves, especially with reference to their religious activities. Brother Parker is not at all idealized, but is presented with the faults which might tempt an ignorant and very human religious leader. On the whole, the old exhorter was sincere and devout in his desire to exemplify the teachings of the scriptures according to his interpretation of them. Not long before his death he had severely reprimanded Jim the Fiddler, the confirmed sinner of the plantation when, by his melodious music, he had enticed Sis Mandy wantonly to enjoy a tune to the extent of modding her head vigorously with the rhythm. The old man's shock at Sis Mandy's "collogin' wid de spe'it of de devil," was, according to rumor, the cause of his death.

These Dunbar stories which portray the old plantation exhorter reveal the familiar personal characteristics accorded the conventional figures, and occasionally added a touch that animated the portrayal. This is well illustrated in "The Walls of Jericho," where the innate intelligence, the pride and the high sense of honor of the old preacher are vividly displayed. Brother Parker's fickle congregation had gone to the woods near the Mordaunt plantation to hear the free Negro preacher in camp meeting

services. The evangelist wielded great power by this sensational procedure: each night he would stop the services at the most exciting point, command his audience to follow the example of the children of Israel and, munching the food which they had brought in baskets, march round and round the inclosure as the Israelites had marched around the walls of Jericho. Brother Parker knew and the revivalist knew that this was only a ruse to attract the picnic loving slaves so that they might satisfy their emotional natures and relax from the tension of the meeting. Since hypocrisy was not one of Parker's faults, the preacher's mind was filled with disgust, anger and chagrin that his people were so easily beguiled. Adding insult to injury two of Parker's young masters teased him about the matter and by their sarcastic remarks forced the old preacher to attend the revival.

> On the next night Parker went early to the meeting place, and braced by the spirit of defiance, took a conspicuous front seat. His face gave no sign, though his heart throbbed angrily and he saw the best and most trusted of his flock come in with intent faces and seat themselves, anxiously to await the advent of an alien. . . . .
>
> But Parker was a diplomat, and when the hymns began, he joined his voice with the voices of the rest. . . . . Everything was tense as if waiting the moment of catastrophe. He found himself joyous and when Johnson arose on the wings of his eloquence, it was Parker's loud "Amen" that set fire to all the throng. . . . . The revivalist called upon them to rise and march around the walls of Jericho. . . . .
>
> It was the fifth time around. . . . . Then the sixth and a rumbling sound was heard near at hand. A tree crashed down on one side. . . . . The preacher's face was ashen, but he attempted to inspire the people, until the seventh turn such a rumbling and such a clattering. . . . .[1]

The meeting had suddenly adjourned--everyone dashed away, except Parker. He must have sensed the prank which the two young masters intended to play, but the congregation never knew that, when, having returned to their senses, they realized that the Reverend Mr. Johnson had fled with them, while Reverend Parker remained calm and called them to wait.

Although the precipitous flight of the preacher with his congregation is not new in fiction[2] this particular scene is not-

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[1]Benjamin G. Brawley, The Best Short Stories of Paul Lawrence Dunbar, p. 49.

[2]Note Ku Klux Klan activities in which the superstition of the slaves often precipitated a flight of this kind (Cf. Joel Chandler Harris, Gabriel Tolliver [New York: McClure Phillips, 1902]).

able because of the reaction of Parker who was not a party to the trick but who seemed to appreciate the situation. Dunbar's analysis of Parker's state of mind makes clear the position of the injured preacher, and in this process reveals an attempt to make a psychological interpretation of the character in addition to the simple narrative of his actions. The whole story is an account of Parker's problem and how it was solved as well as a depiction of the gullibility of a group of emotional slaves.

The second group of Dunbar's stories presents the preacher as he is related to varied phases of community life and church activities. "Anner 'Lizer's Stumbling Block" draws attention to the heroine's attempt to "get religion" at a revival, but also reveals the preacher's efforts to help her. The belle of the plantation, Anner Lizer had never thought that she would go to the "mourner's bench," but after these words of the preacher, she found herself among the others:

> But that night when the preacher had pictured the boundless joys of heaven, and then, leaning over the pulpit and stretching out his arms before him, had said in his softest tone, "Now come, won't you sinnah? De Lawd is jes on de othah side; jes' one step away, waitin' to receibe you. Won't you come to him? Won't you take de chance o' becomin' j'int 'ars o' dat beautiful city whar de streets is gol' an' de gates is pearl? Won't yo come to him, sinnah? Don' you see de pityin' look he's a-givin' you, a-sayin' Come, come?" she lost herself.[1]

Lively details reveal the vigorous efforts of preacher, elders and congregation to effect the conversion of Anner 'Lizer. Since the problems of the heroine are the center of attention, the individual characteristics of the preacher are not stressed, but his attempts to bring the young belle into the church by using the conventional "invitation" to sinners indicates his use of revivalist's methods.

As the life of the freedmen came to be less directly concerned with the plantation the religious activities became less restricted and the church had opportunity to select its own pastor by having him preach a trial sermon. As in other democratic organizations, the choice involved much political maneuvering, especially when factions had arisen within the church. Frequently the virtues of the respective candidates made little difference to the voter, for loyalty to the faction was the important thing.

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[1]Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Folks from Dixie (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1898), p. 8.

In "Trial Sermons on Bull-skin" this choosing of a pastor is dramatically presented. The filling of the vacancy in the church at Bull-skin challenged the diplomacy and ingenuity of the leader of the two factions, Brother Hezekiah Sneedon and Sister Hannah Williams. Both candidates, Reverend Elias Smith, and Reverend Abram Martin were powerful preachers and the contest at the trial sermons would be evenly matched, if preaching was the deciding point. In the course of the events--the man hired to shout and break up the "trial sermon" of Brother Sneedon's candidate, and the triumphant dinner given by Brother Sneedon so that his candidate was certain to win--the personality of each preacher receives some attention. For instance, the sermon of Reverend Elias Smith, candidate for Sister William's party made no impression upon the other faction although the preacher was well received by the congregation as a whole:

> The Reverend Elias Smith arose and glanced over the congregation. He was young, well-appearing, and looked as though he might have been unmarried. He announced his text in a clear, resonant voice: "By deir fruits shell you know dem."
>
> The great change that gave to the blacks fairly trained ministers from the schools had not at this time succeeded their recently accomplished emancipation. And the sermon of Elder Smith was full of all the fervor, common-sense, and rude eloquence of the old plantation exhorter. He spoke to his hearers in the language that they understood, because he himself knew no other. He drew his symbols and illustrations from the things which he saw most commonly about him--things which he and his congregation understood equally well. He spent no time in dallying about the edge of the subject, but plunged immediately into the middle of things, and soon had about him a shouting, hallooing throng of frantic people. . . . .[1]

This characterization is a good commentary upon many of the sermons which have appeared in the immediate post-war fiction when the preacher bore closer resemblance to the plantation exhorter than to the educated licensed minister.

The short stories of Dunbar present the preacher in scenes which reveal his pastoral activities in the general management of church affairs. Although in the Christmas celebration in churches the preacher was portrayed in a relatively unimportant role, some character traits appear in his supervision of the church affairs.[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 94.

[2] In "Mt. Pisgah's Christmas 'Possum" the preacher catered to the tastes of the congregation and planned a Christmas dinner

For instance, in "One Christmas at Shiloh," the plot deals with the happy Christmas of one faithful member of this church whose errant husband returned and much to her surprise and pride, preached the Christmas sermon. The pastor of the church is described as he presides over the meetings, and the comments show that he is a tactful, astute minister who understands his people and the productive organization of his church. The author comments upon him:

> Shiloh was not one of the fashionable churches of the city, but it was primarily a church home for any Southern Negro. . . . . Its pastor was one of those who had not yet got beyond the belief that any temporal preparation for the preaching of the Gospel was unnecessary. It was still his firm trust, and often his boast, that if one opened his mouth the Lord would fill it, and it grew to be a settled idea that the Lord filled his acceptably, for his converts were many and his congregation increased.
>
> The Rev. Silas Todbury's education may have been deficient in other matters, but one thing he knew, and knew thoroughly--the disposition of his people. He knew just what weaknesses, longings and desires their recent bondage had left with them, and with admirable shrewdness contrived to meet them. He knew that in preaching they wanted noise, emotion and fire; that in the preacher they wanted free-heartedness and cordiality. He knew that when Christmas came they wanted a great rally, somewhat approaching, at least the rousing times both spiritual and temporal that they had had on the plantation when Christmas meant a week of pleasurable excitement.[1]

Diplomatically Reverend Todbury called together all the willing sisters in the church, and with subtle flattery enlisted their efforts in making plans for the "festabal" and various other entertainments of Christmas week. As a religious leader this preacher was genial, energetic and intelligent, very far removed from the plantation preacher whose main interest was in preaching an acceptable sermon.

The third group of Dunbar's stories portrays the newer type preacher in conflict with the outmoded conceptions of the ex-slaves who could not accept the attitudes and methods of the completely emancipated Negro. In "Old Abe's Conversion," the conflict between the old order and the new in religious problems is

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to be eaten at the church. The money members paid for the dinners would be used for general expenses. The disaster came when the four "possums" entrusted to one good brother shrank into one (Folks from Dixie, pp. 125 ff.).

[1] Paul Lawrence Dunbar, The Heart of Happy Hollow (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1904), pp. 37-38.

represented by the father and son--both preachers. Young Robert had gone to college, rejecting the idea that he would be endowed with supernatural powers for preaching without benefit of education. His father, Abram Dixon, had been firm in the belief that "if you opened your mouth the Lord would fill it," for he had found this true all his life as a plantation exhorter. "With him religion was a matter of emotion, and he relied for his results more upon a command of feeling than upon an appeal to reason."[1] During his vacation from his own pulpit the young Reverend Robert Dixon visited his father--and the two extremes clashed from the beginning. First, the old man objected to the idea of a vacation--he had never had a vacation. Then old Abram disapproved of Robert's having played football at college--it was a waste of time. The differences between father and son were further emphasized in their basic conception of Christianity: the younger man was mainly interested in racial uplift: decent living and general social uplift, while the father's aim was in "teachin' dem to die decent."[2] The great test came when Robert, preaching to his father's congregation without manuscript, out of concession to their prejudices, failed miserably:

> His sermon was a very quiet, practical one; a sermon that sought to bring religion before them as a matter of every-day life. It was altogether different from the torrent of speech that usually flowed from that pulpit. The people grew restless under his spiritual reserve. They wanted something to sanction, something to shout for, and here was this man talking to them as simply and quietly as if he were not in church. . . . .
>
> Even Robert's father sat with his head bowed in his hands, broken and ashamed of his son; and when, without a flourish, the preacher sat down, after talking twenty-two minutes by the clock, a shiver of surprise ran over the whole church. His father had never pounded the desk for less than an hour.[3]

The contrast between the old type preacher and the new type preacher is dramatized in this scene where the father and son oppose each other in the pulpit before an unsympathetic audience. The father's feelings are described more closely than the son's, and his opinion of the young minister's methods is expressed in stinging words:

> "Is dat de way de teach you to preach at college?"
> "I followed my instructions as nearly as possible, father."
> "Well, Lawd he'p dey preachin' den! Wy, befo' I'd ha' been in dat pulpit five minutes, I'd ha' had dem people moan-

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[1] Ibid., p. 106. [2] Ibid., p. 109. [3] Ibid., p. 113.

in' an hollerin' all over de church."

"And would they have lived any more cleanly the next day?"

The old man looked at his son sadly, and shook his head as at one of the unenlightened.[1]

The vindication of the son and the reconciliation with his father is presented with the same dramatic skill. While visiting his son old Abram was taken to the social institutions--the courts and jails--where Robert was doing much relief work. The eyes of the plantation exhorter were opened and he honestly admitted his misconceptions in his sermon in his son's pulpit:

> . . . . It was a strange service that Sunday morning. The son introduced the father, and the father, looking at his son who seemed so short a time ago unlearned in the ways of the world, gave as his text, "A little child shall lead them."
>
> He spoke of his own conceit and vainglory, the pride of his age and experience, and then he told of the lesson he had learned. "Why, people," he said, "I feels like a new convert!"
>
> It was a gentler gospel than he had ever preached before, and in the congregation there were many eyes as wet as his own.[2]

Using direct portrayal, with brief comments, the author reveals the conflicts objectively and indicates the plot through action. Neither sermon is given at any length, but the point of view of each preacher is displayed through conversation, comments and activities. Although the personal breach could have dominated the action, Dunbar chose to subordinate it to the religious conflicts and to use the father-son relationship merely to heighen the situation. The reconciliation between old Abram and his son emphasizes the adjustment and modification of old religious concepts to the new interpretations of religious education.

In another story, "The Ordeal at Mt. Hope," a similar treatment of the clash between older and newer conceptions of religion appears, except that the clash in this narrative exists between the preacher and his congregation. The young, college-bred preacher, Howard Dokesbury, is set in opposition to a community that is not only ignorant, but filled with evil individuals who are reluctant to turn away from its dirt and disease. Mt. Hope reflected the temper and mind of its inhabitants--dirty, dingy, desolate, yet perfectly satisfied, even defiant. Rev. Dokesbury's first view of it as he descended from the Jim Crow, is characteristic:

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[1] Ibid., p. 114. [2] Ibid., p. 121.

> The colour scheme of the picture that met his eyes was in dingy blacks and grays. . . . . Here and there a lazy cur lay drowsily snapping at the flies and at the end of the station, perched on boxes or leaning against the wall, making a living picture of equal laziness stood a group of idle Negroes exchanging badinage with their white counterparts across the street. . . . .[1]

In personal appearance, the preacher is pleasant--deep dark brown skin, short cut hair with a close curl in it, finely proportioned and stalwart looking with a "general air of self-possession and self-sufficiency in his manner. There was a firmness in the set of his lips."[2] Early rebuffs because he was the Methodist preacher instead of the Baptist minister prepared the young man for the reception in his new home where the host was sullen and hostess irritable because their only son had brought disgrace upon the family by his profligacy. Upon these personal problems as well as the community problems the Reverend Dokesbury exerted all his tact, discretion and energy. He suffered numerous attacks, ranging from the battering of mischievous boys on the streets to more serious disturbances in the church. At his first service, the drunken son of his landlady entered the church, causing some confusion, but mainly provoking the preacher's thought:

> All of a sudden a great revulsion of feeling came over Dokesbury. Trembling he arose and opened the Bible. There lay his sermon, polished and perfected. The opening lines seemed to him like glints from a bright cold crystal. What had he to say to these people, when the full realization of human sorrow and care and of human degradation had just come to him? What had they to do with firstlies, and secondlies, with premises and conclusions? What they wanted was a strong hand to help them over the hard places of life and a loud voice to cheer them through the dark. He closed the book again upon his precious sermon. . . . . He let his glance rest for another instant on the mother's pained face and the father's bowed form, and then turning to the congregation began, "Come unto me all ye that labour. . . . ." Out of the fullness of his heart he spoke unto them. . . . . He forgot all save that here was the well-being of a community put into his hands whose real condition he had not even suspected until now. . . . .[3]

This treatment of the preacher reveals the basic conception of Christianity that motivated Reverend Robert Dixon when he showed his father the effects of his social and community work.

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[1] Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Folks from Dixie, p. 30.

[2] Ibid., p. 31. [3] Ibid., pp. 54-55.

In the case of Mt. Hope, Reverend Dokesbury had greater need of proving to his critical congregation the new ideas through actual labors, revealing the concrete results of applied Christianity. The narrative exhibits this young preacher in daily contact with wicked, ignorant, or indifferent individuals whom he must win to a new concept of religion through a different way of life.

In this depiction Reverend Dokesbury's character illustrates the conventional pattern of the young minister in fiction of the last decade of the century: an admirable young man, well educated, a kind of social missionary, but at the same time a "regular fellow." His person is usually pleasing, his physique powerful--it usually pointed out that he played football in college. Fearless and courageous, this preacher also possessed tact and ingenuity, was kind and gentle when necessary, and modestly intelligent and courteous in deportment. Since a paragon of virtue would not only be unrealistic but irritating, the new type preacher is frequently guilty of indiscretions and mistakes--he becomes angry and speaks impulsively, or he lets a personal antipathy or preference control some action. On the whole, however, he displays remarkable powers for succeeding against great odds. In all of Dunbar's portrayals of the newer type minister, there is a reconciliation of the old ideas and the new, or some kind of compromise as the preacher teaches the common people his concepts through practical application. Certainly, in "The Ordeal at Mt. Hope," the community is not revolutionized by the new gospel of Reverend Dokesbury, although the young preacher's efforts bore some fruit in the rehabilitation of certain individuals in his congregation.

In this story the characteristics of the new type preacher are presented forcefully by direct narration, description and clear dialogue, while there is an attempt to penetrate the mental states of Dokesbury as he more and more clearly realizes the social problems of his church members. Since the characters are few and the plot limited by the conventions of the short story, except in the one sermon no attempt is made to give the effect of the preacher upon any large group, or upon his whole congregation. This presentation does not create the suspense or dramatic interest that was evident in "Old Abe's Conversion," although there is an occasional exciting moment as at the first Sunday service. The

aim seems to be to express and analyze briefly the problems of a young minister who undertakes a pastorate in a community like Mt. Hope, and to indicate in narrative fashion his methods of meeting and solving these problems.